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BY THE REV. A. D. EDDY, D.D.
NEWARK, N. J.

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THE FAITH DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.—EPISTLE OF JUDE, 3d VERSE.

ASSEMBLED as the ministers and servants of God, it becomes us to review the commission under which we act, and the duties it imposes. That commission is the Gospel of Christ, whose heavenly precepts are our guide, and whose Spirit is our Counsellor.

By the Faith once delivered to the Saints, is meant that system of truth and grace which was given by prophets, and by Jesus Christ and his apostles to the people of God. It is that system of truth which embodies and makes known to us what are the existing ultimate facts in the moral kingdom of God—His character, and the laws of his government—the character and condition of its subjects—the plan of redemption—the conditions of salvation, and the future state of souls. These, with their kindred and essential truths, constitute the facts which we are to receive upon the testimony of God, who has revealed them to us. Hence they are denominated, the Faith, that is, a system of truth to be believed.

As these existing ultimate facts are taught to men, they become doctrines—divine truths, in which men are to be instructed.

The more general features of this system, are, God's uncontrolled sovereignty—the apostacy and sinfulness of man—his free agency and moral obligation—the Deity, incarnation and atonement of Christ—the necessity of regeneration, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, in executing the purpose of God to save sinners; while such as are incorrigible are left to reap the fruits of their own depravity.

FIRST, I remark, by this system of truth Christ established his kingdom in this world; and these are the doctrines which the apostles inculcated and defended, and which have been handed down to us by the wisest and best of men in every age.

1. Passing the obvious and acknowledged fact of God's unlimited sovereignty, we meet as the earliest instruction of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the entire sinfulness and moral helplessness of man. The nature and plan of his gracious economy rested upon this ground alone. He expressly declares, that his Gospel is suited only to apostate and ruined men. It is emphatically a system of mercy, and purely of mercy. It in no case admits the possibility of salvation on the ground of original or partial merit, or of mercy given to remedy the defect of human worth.

Jesus Christ repeats and sanctions prophecy: "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." And surely darkness and death, those dread symbols of the eternal pit, are no doubtful testimony of man's guilt and helplessness.

Paul and the other disciples enforced the same melancholy truth. The graphic hand of the apostle has drawn in shades of night, the depraved character of man, and though drawn eighteen centuries ago, it is the living portraiture of every sinner now. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; dead in trespasses and sins." This charge is universal. It is not the picture of some distant and solitary degradation, where causes most malignant combine to pollute and prostrate: no, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The entire character of human loyalty is ended; all have gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one; death has passed upon all men.

This melancholy fact has come down to us through the hands of men venerable for wisdom and holiness. In this moral degradation and death, we recognise the doctrine of man's *native* corruption and *entire* sinfulness. We are taught, that, from the apostacy of Adam flowed the stream of moral pollution and debasement, and that man is helpless without the grace of God in Christ. We here recognize more than the simple predominance of the animal propensities over the moral sense, as constituting our inheritance from the fall: the heart is diseased, and the entire moral character in ruins.

2. Upon this ruined state of man, succeeded the provisions of the atonement.

"I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" says the Savior. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick—I am the way, the truth, and the life—I am the light of the world—If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me."

In the atonement of Christ, he would have us recognize universal and unconditional mercy, in the provisions of pardon and profers of salvation to all mankind.

This atonement, in the amplitude of its provisions, was the theme of the apostles' preaching every where. They were literally filled and enraptured with the doctrine of the cross—"Christ," our "passover," "propitiation," "sacrifice"—"without the shedding of blood, no remission." The atonement of Christ, we are authorised to regard as the glorious devising of the Infinite Jehovah to illustrate the divine perfections, to advance and secure the honor and stability of the divine government, and to save the lost race of men. We are to regard it as adequate for all the purposes of man's salvation; as the ground for the proffer of pardon to all; its claims binding on all; its blessings open to all; and its rejection as constituting the guilt and condemnation of the soul. While we would limit the power and proffers of the blood of Christ only by the boundary of human necessity, we would not abridge at all the obligations and responsibilities of the sinner. We do not regard the atonement, as expressive of God eager in the pursuit of justice, bent upon the renewed vindication of his injured honor; for then he might have swept another race of rebels to the pit: but we view his designs as replete with wisdom and "mercy, encompassing justice," and giving an infinite advance in moral government. With us, mercy leads the way; and it is for salvation that Christ appears and dies, while justice is honored and law enforced.

We do not view the atonement as a mere symbolic representation, on the one hand, nor on the other as the simple creation of justice in its demands for vengeance; but rather as the device of love, mercy, and wisdom; a glorious and gracious substitution for the guilty.

With such a death in view, the death of the adorable Son of God, we behold God just, in justifying the believer; we are assured that all who believe shall be saved.

We are not troubled, nor would the gospel embarrass our ministry with the speculations of the schools as to the exact purchase of the death of Christ: but we behold in God, through Christ, the redemption of the world; justice honored; moral government secured; God satisfied; and from his glorious nature we behold flowing forth rivers of life and salvation to the lost; mercy, swift on its wing as the white-robed seraph; light breaking from the throne; the teachings of truth; the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; grace abounding to the chief of sinners; angels of light and love ministering to men, rocking the cradle of infancy, and leading the weary patriarch home: the grace and power of the Holy Ghost perfecting the purposes of mercy in Christ to a ruined world. Call this what you please; the purchase of Christ; a part of his atonement; or the necessary, the natural outgoings of the grace of God to the guilty and the lost, where justice and law, truth and government, are honored and secured by the substituted merits and death of a divine Savior. All this "is just like God"—just what we should expect him to do, in view of Christ. All the attributes of his nature conspire to bless and save; blending and radiating forth in the richness and

glories of salvation to the lost and dying. I will not ask, did Christ purchase exactly all this, but I behold in the parental, kind, and blessed God, a nature infinitely lovely, and ready to restore to his arms, and raise to his throne every returning apostate. We rather behold and welcome all this, from the overflowing exuberance of eternal love, than from the rigid exactions of a commercial purchase. The sun no more bursts upon the world when the clouds are scattered, than the exhaustless love and grace of God flow forth in streams of salvation when the vicarious atonement is fully made.

Moreover, while we admire in all this the richness of divine grace, we never forget, that it is through the death of Christ, his advocacy, his spirit, his righteousness, that these blessings of life and heaven are opened and secured to the lost. The veil has been lifted from heavenly glories by his hand alone, and our life and hope, with every aid and agency that attend us from the cradle to the grave and to heaven, we refer gratefully and exclusively to the blood of Christ.

3. Upon the ground of this atonement, Christ has rested the obligations of men to repent, or, rather, made them doubly imperative, and pronounces their condemnation as the fruit of its rejection; and on its universal rejection rises the necessity of divine and sovereign power to secure its gracious purposes.

Christ saw and met the melancholy fact, that his love would be despised. His own received him not. The cry every where arose, Have me excused! Away with him! One universal burst of disaffection moved the multitudes of wretched men.

In view of this rejection of his salvation, Christ in his first public address presented the doctrine of sovereign and distinguishing grace: "Many widows were in Israel when the heavens were shut up for three years and six months, but unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon; and many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisens the prophet, but none of them were cleansed but Naaman, the Syrian. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

In the apostles' teachings we meet the same fact of Christ's rejection, and everywhere they preached the doctrine of special, divine sovereignty in the salvation of men. They rested their hope of success on God alone. No force of means, no power of persuasion, no majesty of miracles, though coming in the glories of heaven or the commanding terrors of the judgment, could subdue the soul. Amid the crowds of rebellious men madly rushing to death, the apostles beheld the purpose of God to rescue from an apostate race a seed to serve him, made willing in the day of his power.

And how did Paul receive the announcement of this gracious purpose? Beholding this universal apostacy and rejection of Christ, "There is a remnant," he cries; but how? According to

the election of grace. "All things work together for good to them that are called, according to his purpose."—"That the purpose of God according to election might stand." "God hath saved us and called us by a holy calling." But how? "Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose." That is, God has a settled purpose in regard to men, and in the course of his providence that purpose becomes developed and executed; and men may as well object to the providence as to the purpose of God. What is his providence but the exhibition of his purposes of grace—purposes which do not rest on the blind contingencies of human conduct, but on his own sovereign pleasure? "Whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate, them he also called." "We have obtained an inheritance," saith Paul, "being predestinated according to the purpose of *Him* who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." Filled with confidence by the unshaken securities of grace, he exclaims, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?—I endure all things for the elect's sake.—An apostle according to the faith of God's elect."

This doctrine of distinguishing sovereignty is seen as plainly in nature and providence as in the Bible. Why is it calm to-day, and storms to-morrow? Why yonder heaves the trembling earth, and here firm as everlasting hills? Why that blushing health and beauty, and this pale form and sickly grief? The giant mind, and feebleness of thought? Here is settled reason and manly purpose, there the disordered mind, the clanking chains, the maniac's dreary home. Why your vigor and your life; the cold form prematurely in the grave? That hoary head; the infant in its shroud? Are these referred to causes within your own control? What then rules the winds, and waves, and all the secret ministers of God? "They are causes still." True, and such they are as stamp their full efficiency with the power of God.

And is it not as wise and good that God should have his plan, his purpose and decree, to raise immortal souls to heaven through Jesus Christ, as to guide the flight and falling of a sparrow? To clothe the fields of heavenly light and fill the mansions of his holiness and glory, as to gem the firmament with stars and mantle the earth with bloom and waving harvests?

"But human freedom is invaded," Not at all. This is the only ground where the sovereignty of God in the execution of his purposes, does not invade and enchain the freedom of man. Life you cannot give, nor lengthen out one hour. Health and beauty are not within thy reach. The winds and waves, the thunders and the storms, the slightest breeze, the evening dew, are all remote from thy control. But where is the infringement of moral freedom either when in sin, in turning to God, or in aspirations for heaven? Ah, it is because man is free in morals and religion, that he so dreads in sin the sovereignty of God, the sad account his proffered grace demands. It is sovereignty over mind, and

in its majesty of wisdom and power, leaves that dread responsibility man fears to meet.

4. Hence Jesus Christ explicitly declared the obligation of the sinner to meet the whole will of God, demanding repentance and faith as the conditions of pardon. This was the burden of his preaching; and his apostles followed in his steps. On the day of Pentecost, and in the prison of Philippi, and in every place, they testified of repentance and faith in God as voluntary acts of the human mind. The obligations of men to be holy and to serve God are not suspended and lost in his sovereign grace, nor are they created by his purposes of efficient action on the soul.

5. The doctrine of regeneration, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in effecting it, were strong features in the Gospel of Christ. "Ye must be born again. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The apostle adds, "Ye are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

We are taught that every serious reflection, every right emotion, every holy affection in the soul of man, is the production of the Spirit of God. There is no support for belief in the original or acquired powers of the soul for the attainment of personal holiness; nor does the nature of man yield its enmity to God under the influence of moral suasion, independently of the divine spirit. We see his obligation to do his duty, even the whole will of God, as he is required; but such is his native and nurtured depravity, that without the special and direct influence of the Holy Spirit on his heart, awakening and regenerating to a new life, he will never love nor serve God.

While the Redeemer and the entire ministry of inspired men honor the word of God and all the instrumentalities of grace,—the church, the ministry, the ordinances, all designed for the salvation of men, and most happily adapted to the end in view,—yet the hope and certainty of success rests not here. Truth, though divine, and eloquence inspired; men and angels concurrent; every motive urged on hope and fear; all of mercy and of heaven, of judgment and despair, pressing on the heart; with this alone the sinner never yields his enmity to God and holiness.

The transformation of apostate man,
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
Is work for Him that made him.

Our reliance is on the Spirit to regenerate and save. He does it in sovereign pleasure, and hence we confide in Him. He does it through the truth, and hence we love and preach the word. Here preciousness infinite gathers around the ministrations of truth, and glory divine invests the Spirit of God.

6. It is necessary merely to allude to those kindred and essential truths with which Christ introduced his kingdom, and committed it to his disciples.—The pledge of continued grace to the believer;

the demand for Christian efforts and the value of holy obedience; the resurrection and the judgment, the acceptance of the righteous, and the endless misery of the wicked.

All these the Apostles fortified and enforced, ever making justification by faith alone and the pledge of heavenly grace the ground of their labor and their hopes. Holding up the promise of aid divine and the vision of heavenly glories, they cry, lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race set before us. And to the Christian, in his toils and conflicts, this is like the high stimulus of promised and certain victory to the girded soldier on the battle field; he pants after God and presses onward to the skies.

These were the doctrines that lingered with the men of God through the perils of that night of centuries, and that so cheered the darkness of their prisons and their mountain glens. The Reformers, waking the world from the midnight of delusion and sin, were strongly imbued with these evangelical sentiments; Wickliffe, Luther, Calvin, Zuingli and Knox, with their illustrious coadjutors, are known too well by the slander of their principles and fiery persecution, yet they rise before us and will for ever shine as stars in the firmament of mind, whose course of evangelical piety, so well defined, will ever mark the surest and the brightest path to honor and to God.

We hail with admiration and reverence these same doctrines in the piety, toils and persecution of our Puritan and Huguenot ancestry, and trace their apostolical succession, their union to Christ and security of covenanted mercies, in their love and defence of *the faith delivered to the saints*.

In the Mathers, Brainerd, Edwards, and other cotemporaries and successors to the honored of our pilgrim fathers, with those who laid the foundation of our constitutional and tolerant polity, we find the vigorous and holy workings of this faith, rearing the structure of national piety, giving to the world the brightest evidence of political integrity, missionary zeal and religious purity. Look at the institutions of law, learning, and benevolent piety; and who are the men and the churches that have given them a cordial and manly support? With modesty and with gratitude, we can ask in confidence, is not the church of our inheritance, strong in her faith and love of truth and Christ? We believe these evangelical doctrines to be the system of our faith and ministry.—And as we receive it, can that system be defective? Are not the truths I have reviewed, as we receive them, the doctrines of grace? Are not these the foundations of hope—the heavenly seed committed to our hands? Have not the gardens of God been cultivated with these, and from them harvests grown, enriching and filling the prepared mansions of heaven? Ask the illustrious dead that once filled our pulpits. Blessed spirits, what is their response? Ask the thousands that have gone up in chariots of salvation to the skies. Ask the ten thousand waiting disciples of

Christ, kindling with joys divine.—What mean these wide and expanding efforts of Christian love? Whence have gone the messengers of mercy to pagan lands? Where have the suns of light and the grace of God spread the richest scenes of Pentecost? If these are not the doctrines of grace, what are they? If not, where shall we find them?

Embracing these doctrines as our inheritance and our faith, we have no sympathy with the novelties of human device even in their ministration. We love those heavenly lights of experience, which a century ago, made these gardens of God fresh and fruitful, attesting the truth by the salvation of thousands. We love the ways our fathers trod to righteousness and heaven.

And still less have we sympathy or patience with the speculations of that philosophy, so confidently asserting such advance in theological science, that the heart in its desperate wickedness is to be subdued by its new-found methods of presenting truth, and the very sceptic won back to the love of God and duty by the perception of its harmony and consistency with the deductions of cultivated intellect. To these we give no advocacy, no support.

In the second place, we are naturally led to the importance of the injunction of the text to "*contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.*"

With all the virtue and benignity of this system it has never been permitted to advance in this world without vigorous opposition. The persecuted house of Jacob under Pharaoh, the oppression and the murders of Egypt, are but the early symbols of unwearied opposition and enmity to the truth and the people of God. The repeated wars of Israel are living types of the more fatal conflict between truth and error.—Early was the cry against the Son of God; he is no friend of Cæsar—if we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation—Not this man but Barabas. As the Apostles unfolded the faith of Christ, their persecution began. The holy martyrs succeeded them—The ten persecutions—the Lollards—the Waldenses—the Reformers—the Puritans—the still persecuted Protestants of the East—all clinging to this same "faith" in their sufferings unto death, exhibit the hostility of man to the truth. And who but evangelical Christians have ever been the subjects of continued persecution? Their "faith" stands sublimely alone in the history of its origin, its progress, its sufferings and its hopes. It calls for our defence as it merits our confidence and love.

1. We should contend for this faith because it gives the only true delineation of human character and standard of human duty. Here are the statutes of a divine, moral administration; the revealed character and will of God; the specific rule of life, adapted to our peculiar condition. Obscure these and we wander in darkness. Destroy these and we are lost. Here is the lamp of our feet and the light of our path. The wisdom of God and the

power of God unto salvation. These gone and there is no stimulus to virtue, and no security of peace.

I do not mean that without these we have no substitute from the Bible, but I mean, if we reject that system of faith which we have considered, we can obtain no substitute from the Bible, nor from any other source. Try the experiment of framing a system of faith that shall exclude these evangelical features and at the same time retain all possible affinity besides to the gospel. Follow its history and it soon breaks forth into fanaticism and delusion, or, kindred to infidelity, sinks into its cold and cheerless bosom. Religion dies and hope expires.

Remove from the gospel man's entire sinfulness and condemnation—salvation by Christ alone as a divine Redeemer—sovereign grace—the Spirit's agency and power—promised good to the saints—justification by faith, and future awards, and what is there left? The inspired pages, now radiant with light, are a cheerless blank—where now they are instinct with the wisdom and the power of God, tender and subduing with the love of Christ, sustaining and cheering by the spirit of promise, all is lifeless and cold.

2. We should defend this faith, for it uniformly aids in the advance and security of civil liberty.

An interesting chapter in the improvement of man is here opened. The "faith" before us, recognising the moral equality of our race by nature, and their uniform dependence upon God, has created a free church, whose principles of truth and polity have ever been at war with all human distinctions and unrighteous oppression. It would remove popular ignorance and give to every man the knowledge of his personal rights. Rectifying the obliquities of the heart, it would dispose all men to justice and charity.

I present this "faith" with that ecclesiastical polity almost uniformly associated with it, in distinction from the papacy, the prelacy and the ordinary policy of Arminianism wherever found. The history of centuries settles indubitably the fact, that the workings of the papacy and the prelacy have been at war with liberal sentiments, with popular rights and improvement; just the result that might have been predicted from their peculiar principles. At the same time the more recent rise of other Arminian communities has from their beginning absorbed all popular rights in the power of the clergy, and constructed a colossal system adverse to representative and republican liberty. The night of ages—the revolution of 1688—the Reformation—our own Revolution, and the action of these systems to the present hour, confirm this position, and fearfully admonish us of our duty and our perils.

On the contrary, the "faith" we embrace, has ever been the advocate and hand-maid of freedom of conscience, popular education, and civil liberty. We see the Cantons of the Swiss and other Calvinists of Europe; the Puritans of England infusing into the British constitution, the principles of popular freedom; our pilgrim fathers constructing their free churches, which gave to the world,

even before they dreamed of it, the active elements of a free state, too vigorous for the strong arm of foreign power to control. It is the peculiarity of the system we have advocated, that it can live every where, under every form of government, and work its way against all adverse interests. At the same time it acts with elastic energy against every abuse of power, and seeks to root out of the human heart the very elements of lordliness and oppression.

We believe this "faith" adequate to all the necessities of the human family. There are evils in the personal and civil relations of men, that we all deplore, and we have waited for ages in vain upon legislative enactments to remove them. Their origin lies beyond the reach of legislative control, whether issuing from civil or ecclesiastical courts. The evils to which I allude admit of no direct and sudden remedy. They grow out of the depravity of the human heart and the consequent imperfections of organised communities, and must be left to the applications and influences of the Gospel, which alone is found adequate to cure the diseases of the heart, and the evils of social life.

It was obviously not the design of the Savior to form his church to oppose, in their collective, legislative capacity, the great evils of organised society. The gospel embodies great principles, and associates Christians in churches for the culture of social religion, to watch over each other, to form one harmonious family, and from the unity, peace and charity of their sanctified brotherhood, to commend Christ and religion to the world. It was never intended that Christians should war upon the world by edicts, denunciatory enactments, and probably not to advance far in legislative action upon abstract questions of casuistry even within the bosom of the church, except by scriptural adjudication upon cases of alleged and actual delinquency, and least of all to act on outward civil relations. By assailing the evils of social life, in confederated masses or ecclesiastical bodies, we not only array the world against the church, but raise divisions and hostilities within our own borders.

There are certain evils which no legislative action will cure. Their removal depends wholly upon the establishment of correct moral principles. Such evils the Bible passes in silence, or incidentally presents as the fruits of sin. And yet it discloses general principles, applicable when understood to every case, and as valuable and efficient as direct, positive precepts can be. This is pre-eminently true of ecclesiastical legislation, which is a thing of its own sort, and by Christ himself is restricted to its own sphere.

Ecclesiastical legislation against specific, social evils, is, in most cases like topping the branches of an exuberant tree, which serves only to increase new and more vigorous shoots from the parent stock. But the "faith" of our adoption strikes at the root of all evil, and by the diffusion of its spirit, we may expect the passing away as by enchantment, the evils of life, till human ignorance, servitude and oppression shall end, and the jubilee of universal liberty break upon the ravished ears of a redeemed race.

"To me," says an able writer, "it seems that either the moral and intellectual changes (desired) must be despaired of entirely, or the chief agent in effecting them must be Christianity—not Christianity in the form of law, concerning itself with outward civil relations, but the Christianity of light and love."

While this position is fortified by history, its origin is found in the peculiar character of our religious sentiments and the necessary ecclesiastical principles attending them.

The sentiments that reduce mankind to one common level as to moral necessities, and subject all alike to the government of a sovereign God, each to render unqualified submission and each to meet the same conditions of salvation; the principles which recognise the parity of the clergy, rejecting all hierarchal distinctions and prerogatives and saving virtue of administered rites, and throw upon the people individual and personal responsibility, such sentiments and principles naturally become the foundation and support of civil liberty, or war even unto death against the encroachment of unrighteous oppression. It was the liberalising influence of these sentiments that gave to Geneva her free church and independent state. And what but these kept alive the indomitable spirit of civil liberty in the Cantons of Switzerland? What but these same sentiments gave to England all the civil liberty she ever knew? What but these laid the foundation of American churches, and ere our Pilgrim fathers were aware of it, gave birth to all the elements of a gigantic civil government? These are the sentiments which are not only to emancipate the soul from the bondage of sin, but to give civil liberty to the world. "The democratic extreme," says D'Aubigne, "issued from Switzerland and France. One of Calvin's predecessors then hoisted the flag which the powerful arm of the Genevan Reformer was to lift again in after years, and plant in France, Switzerland, Holland, Scotland and even in England, whence it was a century later to cross the Atlantic and summon North America to take her rank among the nations." While these sentiments and principles, commending their practical results to the world, would be working out the problem of universal liberty, it is easy to frame a system of church polity, built on sentiments conflicting with these, with great show of popular liberty, and indeed almost of popular licentiousness, which, at the same time shall enact and execute the most stringent laws, taking away substantially every popular immunity and resting all power and property ecclesiastical, in the hands of the clergy, and which shall embody all the elements of the most vigorous and oppressive monarchy, even with its boastful show of popular rights. If the civil liberties of this country shall ever pass away, they will die through the preliminary and insidious workings of corrupted religious principles. And if they are to live unto the light of better days, evangelical religion will herald them to the world.

3. We should earnestly contend for *the faith* because the only satisfactory evidence of being in the true succession of Christ's

disciples, is to be found in the possession of the truth, and in the blessing of God upon its ministrations.

The kingdom of Christ consists in the establishment of moral principles, in truth explained, recognised and embraced by redeemed men. His church is to be found only where these principles are known, where this heaven-born truth is found. "The Bible, and the Bible only," says Chillingworth, "is the religion of Protestants." The Bible is the divine charter on which the church is founded. These oracles of God become the confession of our faith and our common law. Where these are found, embraced and defended, their spirit cherished and their purposes carried out, there are the divinely ordered elements of Christ's kingdom, there is the true church of God. There, I repeat, is the divine charter on which the church is founded, and if the blessing of God rests here, the evidence is complete and irresistible, that here lies the true succession. The divine right thus secured, is transferred, not as senseless heraldry, by will and deed, not by human hands imposed; but whoever have the Bible, embrace its essential truths, submit to its laws, cherish its spirit, and execute its purposes, they inherit its immunities and succeed to all the honors and powers of the only apostolical church.

Here is a right derived from God; the succession of a spiritual Christianity, which cannot be resolved into mere externals, nor secured by seals, rites, keys, from any or all of human investments, from which everything spiritual has fled. Who would look for the succession of a Christian church and a spiritual ministry in the hordes of merciless and profligate monks, or in the benefited and secularised clergy of England, and deny it to Baxter, Cranmer, and Bunyan, holy men of God, valiant for the truth, persecuted for righteousness' sake, and doing wonders in the name of Christ. With equal propriety might Bonaparte, wasting on his ocean-rock, and his wandering family, be recognised as the ruling powers of continental Europe, to the rejection of its rightful sovereigns. As soon regard the asphaltic slime-pits, immersing the fallen towers and palaces of Babylon, as the living city of millions. As the Apostle to the Gentiles declared the evidence of his commission to consist in the *truth* proclaimed, and not in ordinances administered; and as the church is based upon the *truth*, so she expects her ministry to be accredited of God, not in ordinances, not in baptisms, confirmations, and indulgences, but in their *ministrations of truth*.

The true church demands for her ministry the attending and attesting symbols of the Holy Ghost. She is never satisfied with the worshippers of a formal Christianity, that talks more of the Church, its "services, covenant mercies," its liturgy and shadowing rights, than of sin, of justification by faith, the sovereignty of God, or regeneration and holiness of life. The kingdom of Christ requires ministrations that shall abase the soul with the consciousness of its own guilt and wretchedness, and that shall

exalt God alone in the work of its renewal and reunion to himself. With such qualifications and such a succession we are enabled. We have here a living, divine right, a true Christian succession. And without this inspired truth and God's blessing, where can that succession be found?

We are happy to recognize as Christians, and to find our fellowship with Leighton, Sherlock, and Tillotson, valiant for the truth, and powerful amid the profligacy of courts; or with Massillon and Bourdaloue, rebuking sin on the throne. And no less do we rejoice to commune with Fenelon in exile, persecuted, yet radiant in the charity and glory of Christ; with Oberlin, warm-hearted amid the mountain snows of Switzerland; with Felix Neff on the icy Alps, and with Owen, Bunyan, and Doddridge, and Pearce, and Fuller, and the humble followers of Christ everywhere, girded with his truth, and gathering the credentials of their office and their spirit from the attending grace and renewing power of God.

What, in comparison with this are all the investments of a gorgeous pontificate, the regal prelacy, robed, mitred, and enthroned in scarlet on the seven hills, drunk with blood, and claiming the prelatical empire of the world? Or what the pretensions of that less consistent system, that has no higher title to its boasted succession than the stained sceptre of a profligate usurper, or the feeble arm of a gay woman?

4. The faith we have defined is the grand instrument of conversion to God and sanctification for heaven.

While we refer to the agency of the Holy Spirit the salvation of every soul that believeth, and would, in no way, abridge the sovereignty of God, we are never to regard the work of saving men irrespective of such means as are adapted to the nature of the mind, and consistent with our moral agency.

Man may indeed be passive as to that mysterious act performed by the Holy Spirit in regeneration; yet, at the same time, active and voluntary, as a moral agent in view of law, interest, and duty. It is in view of truth that he reflects, is convinced of sin, repents, believes, and seeks conformity to God. And whatever is involved in that sublime work of the soul's renewal by the Holy Spirit, there is no violence to our nature, nor suspension of moral agency. The scriptures declare, that it is by the truth that the Spirit regenerates and saves, and so obvious and so essential is the intervention of truth, that the very power of the Spirit is made to rest here. "The truth shall make you free. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." We have no authority for asserting that the Spirit renews and saves but by the truth. At any rate, we find the territory of all spiritual religion extended only as the truth has shed its heavenly light; and with the glorious prospective of man's salvation in view, we are summoned to the work of preaching the gospel to every creature.

I advance upon this position, and ask, where is spiritual religion found, where vital godliness, where revivals of religion, but where the *faith of our adoption* is known? Revivals of religion are the fruits of *this faith*; not such as are wild, fitful, and evanescent, wrecking the best interests of society, and bringing in fatal delusion; but such as are deep, solemn, pure, and lasting in their results; that enlighten, elevate, and refine the aspect of society.

These truths pour a flood of light on the mind, and kindle the fires of the judgment around the heart; they awaken the powerful sensibilities of the soul, summoning to an audience with death, God, and eternal scenes; they leave no refuge, no rest, but the Rock of Ages, no hope but the love of Christ.

This is the truth the Spirit honors; it is the fire and the hammer that break the rock; the arrow of the Almighty that drinks up the spirit; the source of peace and joy.

This faith, as we view it, is incorporated with the history of piety and all pure religion. Everywhere we see it verified; ye are saved through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth; the truth shall make you free.

Men are not the mere passive recipients of grace; but they are saved by being taught, persuaded, drawn by motives of truth and righteousness; in view of testimony they believe; of sin charged upon them, they are convinced; before God, a sovereign judge, they fear, tremble, and with conscious freedom and responsibility, submit to his authority and the conditions of grace. With Christ a substituted sufferer and savior, and the Spirit to sanctify, with the pledge of protection and support, heaven in view, they press onward to the skies.

5. This faith is the grand source and security of all benevolent efforts. The greatest achievements of good in this world—the most signal moral revolutions have been found in connection with this system of faith. This faith presents, in their true light, the clashings of contending interests, the violent onsets of passion, the sweeping of insatiate ambition. Not a hill, nor a valley—not an ocean, nor a stream, but speaks of revenge and war. To fill every relief, there rise disease, derangement and death, while the great mass of mankind are crowding in one broad, deep, and unbroken column to hell.

Amid all this gloom, desolation and death, the system we advocate presents redemption by Christ—*free salvation*. It rises the solitary star of hope in the horizon of unbroken night. The charity it breathes and enkindles, looking out upon the sickly and dying aspect of the world, turning in grief, with a melting and despairing eye, it reads, and with rapture, too, it reads, there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there.

This redemption comes not alone to teach, to guide by example; not to attest truth simply, but to give life and immortality—a reprieve from death—suspension of justice; that man may live. It goes forth like its author, to bless and save. The benevolence it

inspires seeks the application of its remedy. And as the opposing influences of sin are so appalling, the ocean of woe so deep and shoreless as almost to forbid effort, this system brings an auxiliary, an encouragement, nowhere known but here—the *promise of Almighty power* to execute the purposes of grace, to crown every effort of the saints with an abundant blessing.

Under this system of divine purposes, gracious sovereignty and electing love, we know that religion will revive and spread, multitudes be saved; and God has drawn no limits to our labors and our hopes. Under this system, we enter the wilderness, dark as night, and the pillar of fire is there. Plunge into the sea, and its waves retire. Through Christ we can do all things.

Awakened by the sin and suffering, the condemnation of thousands, their salvation presented by Christ, every motive and auxiliary to secure it, what can more arouse the believer in this truth to labor and die to extend its knowledge to every sinner on the face of the globe? Here are stimulants to the most powerful and untiring activity. I see not how the believer's moral energy can sleep under the Gospel, as *we receive it*. How can he rest while a world is heaving with its throes of anguish, and hell fast filling with its monuments of death?

Under this system there is no place, no permission, to stop or relax exertion for the instruction, improvement, and salvation of an entire world. Yea, there can be no desire to stop: while one distant soul is ignorant of Christ. There is no room for restless caviling, nor stupid unconcern. It is enough to command an angel's mind in the wisdom of its arrangement; enough to arouse the dead in the tremendous nature of its issues.

Then let us "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

THIRDLY, In conclusion, I would allude briefly to the manner in which we should meet the injunction of the text.

This implies no violence, no crusades, no denunciation, no weapons of a carnal warfare. It demands no heated passion; no exclusive partizanship; no violence of the social courtesies and sympathies of life; no invasion of the privileges of private opinion and free discussion; nothing of that distance, reserve and haughty carriage that so often mark the footsteps of ecclesiastical domination, and pride of assumed prerogatives and abused power. Nothing of this should illustrate the deep attachment of the Christian to the faith of his choice, or his defence of its invaded and invaluable principles.

1. We should "*contend for the faith*" by cherishing for it an open and decided attachment. Give it its claims upon your heart and your high regard in all your preaching. Let it be known that you love it as the security of your hopes, the ground of your usefulness, the honor of your Savior. Bind it upon your hearts as the legacy of His love, the charter of His kingdom, and the pledge of your allegiance.

2. *Let this affectionate interest be an enlightened attachment.* The mind of every Christian should be imbued with these lessons of truth. He should ever be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him, and light should radiate from him as from a star.

3. *This faith should be early and prayerfully inculcated in family discipline.* It should be incorporated with the discipline of every household, form the thoughts and aspirations of the opening mind, and become the exhaustless storehouse for earliest initiation and perpetual research. These truths excluded from the family, from the Sabbath School, and from the religious reading for the young, and ignorance, licentiousness, and death, will debase and debase their riper years and close their eternal destiny.

4. *We should secure and sustain those sacred institutions which this faith enjoins, and ever be ready to make sacrifices for its advancement and the security of its purposes.* Its preaching, its ordinances, its recurring services, are not only its symbols, but its securities. And the grand end of this faith secured, is the proof of its transcendent excellence. One revival of religion, scriptural and pure, becomes the divine sanction of the faith that attends it, which neither scepticism nor sin can resist, while its subjects, loving the doctrines and duties inculcated at this eventful crisis of the soul's history, become the living epistles of their purity and value, the monuments we rear to the glory of God, the defence and honor of "*the faith delivered to the saints.*"

5. *We should contend for this faith by affectionate reliance upon God, and fervent wrestling for the spirit that gave it ; for that which makes it the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock—the arrow of the Almighty—the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation.*

Finally, We should contend for the faith by a practical illustration of its *charity—the diffusing spirit and untiring energy of its benevolence.*

The spirit, the life of our faith, is charity. Practical piety is its brightest sanction ; its holy and efficient commendation, "See how these Christians love one another," carried conviction to the heart. And as they love the world, and are alive to its wants, there rises proof of their piety and the power of their faith.

This faith is not to live and spread by the force of controversy, yet thousands are won to truth and to God by the labors of love. And in this age of independent thought, there is no hope from the array of ecclesiastical prerogatives nor from church excisions. There is no saving mercy in spiritual domination, nor in official investitures. These multiply no converts to Christ, while crowds of redeemed from error and death rise from the excellent knowledge, the tenderness of forbearance and the persuasions of love.

The cry of heresy ; the charge of undefined error ; the lifted arm ; the terror of execution ! Is this the way to promote the Christian faith ? Is this the charity it breathes ? In this age of thought, reflection, of argument and advance, errors of philosophy,

of speculation, of creeds even, are not corrected by the asperities of controversy, nor by the charges and dogmas issuing from the schools or the chairs of tutorage. School against school, office against office, church against church, is not the heavenly-directed way to advance the truth and save the world.

But let the ministry of the church be enlisted in the exalted enterprise of charity; pressing onward to convert the world by the truth uncorrupted, radiant in the light of celestial love; and there is no time, no desire to waste their energies in useless contest. That great cause, the world's salvation, so absorbing; its issues so eventful and glorious, all inferior objects are lost in its commanding claims—for ever lost in the magnificence of its triumphs.

My brethren, we have here in *"the faith"* an ample remedy for every evil resting on mankind. In the power of its truth and charity God confides his cause, the infinite purchase of his grace. And it appeals with special interest to us. We profess to be among those whose stern adherence to truth rises superior to all considerations of office and church prescription, and order, and forms. We derive from the truth of God, his power divine, not from official endowments and personal investments. We receive from no human succession the hope and grace of God, but direct from his truth and that eternal Spirit that giveth life. As much as we prize our ecclesiastical order and our forms of scriptural simplicity, we ascribe to them no exclusive efficacy, but ever hold them subservient to the higher ends of truth. Everything else we sacrifice to this; without which, everything of order, of forms, of ordinances, of office, of succession, and endowments is worthless and vain, but with which, religion will live and triumph, and bring to ultimate and heavenly order the entire church of renovated men.

It is not strange, then, that we should have noble confidence, amid all the perils that surround us, just in proportion as we value, and harmonize in, and are determined at all hazards to maintain and advance the *truth as it is in Jesus*. Nor is it strange that we should look with jealousy and dread upon every invasion of the essential elements of the faith, by whomsoever made, or under whatsoever pretensions. There is no wisdom nor charity in obscuring or compromising one essential truth for any end that heaven or earth can name. It should not be overlooked that both mistaken charity and sectarian policy may unite their influence to obscure the truth, and perhaps there has been no time more favorable than the present for this sad result. Mind is no longer isolated and solitary in its investigations; no one wanders in error alone. Men now act in masses, and move forward under the instruction and guidance of schools. One mind gives form and energy to thousands; and when wrongly directed the peril is immense, as by the frost of a single night the rich harvest of a whole year and entire country are cut down. Minds thus moving as in constellations, if in conflict, it is like the concussion of systems.

Error thus diffused, and yet consolidated and fortified, becomes doubly formidable, and demands as formidable, concentrated, and harmonious action to meet and control it. And where can we unite on ground so sacred and safe as on the ground of truth? And for what other ends on earth can we here divide?

I cannot but fear, that, from the imperfections of men, the history of seminaries and universities, and even from laudable desire for Christian union in benevolent efforts, if not from the actual state of the pulpit and the press at this hour, rigid truth, in its high evangelical character, may suffer wrong and be eclipsed.

Resting upon this faith, and upon nothing else, the charter of our church and the basis of our hopes, if this is corrupted or obscured, we, as a distinctive body, are gone; and turning aside for the advancement of other interests than this, we are lost as to the high destiny of our mission. Yea, seeking to cure the evils of the world without this, or in advance of this, we are sure of defeat and of infinite loss.

We are indeed nearing a fearful crisis; the world is in serious conflict, in restless, violent, and convulsive action. All is impatience, uncertainty, and fear. The wisest and the best are in doubt, and hesitate; and I rejoice that it is so. I believe the time has come when God will confound the wisdom of the wise, check the presumption of arrogance, and spiritual boasting, and fanatical zeal, and give a new and brilliant sanction to truth and grace by Jesus Christ. The frameworks reared around the faith must be laid aside, human device be abandoned, and the pure gospel have its course, run and be glorified. Truth the weapon of our warfare, and grace the ground of our hopes, doubts in the policy of our plans will end. God shall open springs in the desert; more than the pillar of cloud and of fire shall guide our way, and more than Canaan spread her rich and radiant fields, our home, our rest, and full reward.

Let the spirit of the Gospel be diffused abroad, Christ crucified be preached, obeyed, and loved, evils appalling shall die away; life from the dead and liberty in God shall reign; as by enchantment, the conflicting elements of the world shall rest; the songs of the jubilee break upon every ear; the charity of truth, righteousness and Christ, adorn and bless the entire race of fallen man.

SERMON CCCCXXVI.

BY THE REV. G. A. LINTNER, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE EVAN. LUTHERAN CHURCH AT SCHOHARIE, N. Y.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO ASSEMBLE FOR PRAYER.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—MATTHEW XVIII. 20.

CHRIST is here speaking of prayer, and of meeting for this purpose. In the preceding verse he says, that if only two of his disciples shall agree to ask anything of his Heavenly Father, it shall be given them. He shows the power and efficacy of united prayer. In the text he expresses the same sentiment, only in much stronger terms; he tells us, that where two or three are assembled in his name, he will be present. The presence of Christ with his people is always to be regarded by them as a great blessing; but more especially in prayer; he is there present, not merely to comfort their hearts with the tokens of his love, as their precious Redeemer, but to hear and answer prayer.

Christ meets his people at the mercy seat with *peculiar manifestations* of his presence. He reveals himself as the mighty deliverer, who is able to save to the uttermost every one that cometh to God through him, as the great Intercessor and prevailing Advocate with the Father, who presents the prayers of his people at the throne of heavenly grace, and is able to procure for them every needed blessing.

The language of Christ in the text is very expressive. It teaches that it is the *duty of Christians to meet for prayer*, and holds out a precious promise as an encouragement to this duty. Christ gives us to understand in these words, that there is something peculiar in united prayer, something that cannot be experienced and realized when we are alone. He does not say that he will not hear us when we call upon him alone in our closets, or at the family altar; but he teaches us that we ought to meet to mingle our prayers at the throne of grace, and that when we thus meet, our prayers will be more effectual than when we call upon his name separately and alone. This is clearly the doctrine of the text, and this doctrine I shall endeavor to illustrate and to establish by several considerations to which I propose to call your further attention.

1. God is ever ready to hear the prayers of his people, when they approach him with the *right spirit*. It matters not in what place or under what circumstances we draw near to God—whether in public or in private, in our closet or in the congregation—if we lift up our *hearts* to God, he will hear our prayer. But still

God is desirous that his people should unite in this service ; that they should come together and agree in what they shall ask, and then go with one accord to the throne of grace and offer the united petitions, that God may grant them the things for which they have agreed to ask.

With such prayer, coming up from united hearts,—hearts drawn out before God with a deep feeling of their common wants, and mutual dependance on God, and bound together by the ties of Christian affection and holy sympathy,—with prayer proceeding from such hearts God is particularly pleased. And when his people pray in this way, when they meet and lift up their hearts together, God is more ready to hear prayer, than when they remain separate and present their petitions individually. When Christians agree as touching anything they shall ask, when they go together to the throne of grace, when they enter into the presence of God with united hearts, and ask in the name of Christ, the Great Mediator, it shall be given them. And Christ has promised that he will be present in such meetings, to encourage the hearts of his people, receive their petitions, and render their prayers effectual.

These are great encouragements and precious promises, which should induce us frequently to meet for prayer. The Lord can do great things for his people. He can build up the waste places, and turn the desolate wilderness into a beautiful field, and make it like the garden of Eden ; but for these things he will be “inquired of by the house of Israel” to do it for them. He will have the prayers of his people ; it is his will that they should assemble themselves for this purpose, that they should come together, and ask him to do these things for them.

Accordingly, we find that when the servants of God felt that they needed the help of the Almighty, or when there was some particular object in which they were deeply interested, and lay heavily upon their hearts, they *met to pray*. When the Jews found that they were ready to perish under the decree of Ahasuerus the king, who condemned them to death, they met to fast and pray. They cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard their cry, and sent them deliverance. When the disciples of Christ, at Damascus, were in danger of being destroyed by the persecution of Saul, who breathed out threatnings and slaughter against them, they assembled to pray ; and God, in answer to their united supplications, stopped the bloody persecutor on his way, and delivered them out of his hands. When Peter was in prison, suffering persecution and exposed to martyrdom, his brethren met to pray ; and while they were yet praying, the doors of the prison were thrown open, and the angel of the Lord led him forth and delivered him out of the hands of his persecutors. When the disciples of our Lord were left by their Divine Master in a world filled with the enemies of the cross, who rose up against them on every side, and threatened to destroy them, they were gathered together to pray ; and the Holy Spirit came down, and the power of God was

manifested in changing the enemies and persecutors of the Christian religion into friends.

Thus we see how the servants of the Lord, of every age, have been drawn together by the spirit of prayer; how they cried unto the Lord in their distress, and how God heard their united cry, and sent them deliverance. This shows that God has a peculiar regard to the supplications of his people, when they meet together to pray. It shows also the great importance of such meetings, and the many advantages that Christians might derive from them if they would more frequently attend them.

We do not mean to assert that these meetings are more important than some other means of grace which Christians ought to use; we do not say that prayer meetings should ever take the place of the regular worship of the sanctuary, or that the Christian duty of attending these meetings should ever interfere with any other Christian duty; but we do mean to say, that Christians should never satisfy themselves with worshipping God, or hearing the Gospel preached once or twice on the Sabbath, and neglect the prayer meeting.

In every Christian church, the Gospel should not only be regularly preached, and faithfully heard on the Sabbath, but the people should meet to pray, either on the Sabbath, or during the week, as may be most convenient for them. It is the solemn duty of every church to see that such meetings are established and sustained. And when such meetings are established, it is the Christian duty of every member of the Church to attend them, for his own edification and for the good of others. A church whose prayer meetings are neglected cannot prosper. A congregation that meets only once a week on the Sabbath to hear the Gospel preached, and does not come together to pray, will soon become cold, and formal, and dead. Such a church need not expect much success on the labors of its minister; it need not look for the conversion of sinners, for revivals of religion; for how can it be expected that God will bestow such blessings, when the people do not ask for them, when they feel no interest in these things, and when they show by their conduct that they live prayerless, and unconcerned for the spiritual prosperity of Zion? Go into a church, or among a people where prayer meetings are neglected, where scarcely one out of twenty ever attend them, and where even some of the leading members stay away for some trifling excuse, and what will you see? You will see no awakening among sinners, no stir among professing Christians, no movement in the valley of dry bones; a dark and dismal gloom, like the gloom of death itself, has settled upon the church, and you hear nothing but complaints about the low state of religion; and this complaint is sometimes uttered by the very persons who never go near the prayer meeting, and who, by their careless and manifest neglect of Christian duties, have occasioned the very state of things of which they complain. It would be strange indeed if such a church could be blessed. It would be

presumptuous even to hope that God would visit such a people with the refreshing influences of the Holy Spirit, while they continue in this state.

And what must become of the members who thus neglect their duty to the church and their own souls? Can they expect to be saved? Do they enjoy religion in their hearts? Have they any evidence that they have an interest in Christ, and a share in his salvation? What is their state? What is the state of their hearts? They have professed Christ and his religion, but they have no love for his church, no attachment to its members. They do not meet with them to pray; they have no communion with Christ, nor fellowship with his members. And now I ask those members who care nothing for the prayer meeting, and have so little love and regard for those who do attend them,—for there are some such members in every church, and I mean to come directly to them with this subject, and I hope that God may send the truth to their hearts, and make them feel it,—I ask the members of the Church who do not attend the prayer meeting, What is the state of your heart? I will not undertake to judge you; God knows your heart; but I can imagine how you feel. I judge from your conduct you feel uneasy, discontented, unhappy, and dissatisfied with the brethren; you feel as though there was no sympathy for you in the Church; no love and regard manifested by its members; as though you were shut out from all communion and fellowship, and had no disposition to meet and associate with them. Now this is a wretched feeling; and this feeling you have, because you *will* cherish it in your hearts, when you ought to try and get rid of it, and might be soon free from it if you would only do your duty. You have neglected your duty. How long is it since you have attended the prayer meeting?—since you have met with your brethren of the church at the mercy seat, and kneeled down before a throne of grace, and united with them in supplication before God? Perhaps never. And if you have done so, it may be months and years since you have performed this duty. And now, is it to be wondered at that you carry about with you a most wretched feeling in your heart—a feeling of jealousy, and distrust, and even ill towards your brethren, and have no disposition to meet and pray with them? Come to the prayer meeting, and open your heart to the influences of the meeting, and try to enter into its spirit, and you will soon lose this feeling. I know of no better remedy for all the bad feelings that enter into the heart of the Christian, than to go to a prayer meeting. Many have found it to be a most effectual cure, and I am sure that you will find it to be so, if you only will take the remedy and apply it faithfully to yourself.

We read of an incident that occurred during the ministry of Christ on the earth, which affords a very beautiful and striking illustration of this subject. The Savior would frequently retire by himself and pray alone. He spent whole nights in this exer-

cise. But on one occasion he took Peter, and James, and John, and went into a mountain, and there, attended by his beloved disciples, he poured out his soul in fervent supplication before God. And while he was praying, the glory of the Lord was revealed; a light shone from heaven, and the Savior's face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light; and Moses and Elias, two glorified spirits, came down from heaven, to hold communion with the worshipers of God on the earth; and such were the feelings and emotions occasioned by this communion of kindred spirits, that Peter exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." O, it is good to meet with Christ and his people, to draw nigh to God in prayer, when Christ himself is present to reveal himself to us, and give us manifestations of his glory. Every Christian who has been blessed in the prayer meeting, has experienced this. And O, how little do they know of the comforts of religion, who have no relish for such enjoyments, no wish, no desire to go where Jesus meets his disciples with the tokens of his love and goodness! O, what are the pleasures of sin, the poor gratifications of this world, when compared with such delightful seasons of refreshing from the presence of God!

And now, let me appeal to Christians who formerly attended the prayer meeting, but have now forsaken and no longer feel any interest in them. Have you not been profited by these meetings? Have not your souls been blessed? Have you not realized the presence of the Savior, and experienced the fulfilment of his promise? Have you not often felt that it was good for you to be there, and pour out your heart in praises and thanksgivings to God for the comfort and gratification he afforded you? How interesting and delightful were these seasons you spent in prayer with your beloved brethren, the servants of God, around you, participating in your feelings, and sharing with you the sweet comfort and peace, which the presence of the Savior produced in your midst! And have you so soon forgotten these precious seasons of spiritual enjoyment, when your hearts were filled with love to God and the brethren, and you could experience no greater delight than to unite with them in the service of God? And are you not denying yourselves a great privilege? Are you not injuring your own souls by staying away from the prayer meeting? Do you not know that you are losing your interest in religion; that grace is diminishing in your hearts; that you are growing more careless, and becoming weaker and weaker every day? And is there no danger in your case that the Holy Spirit will finally leave you, and that God will give you up to perish in the cold and wretched state in which you are now living?

Dear brethren, let me entreat you, by all that is sacred, by the regard you have for your own souls, and the love and compassion of your Redeemer, to consider your state. You have wandered from the fold of Christ; you have gone out of the way. And now let me urge you to return;—return to the places you have va-

cated in the prayer meeting; return to your former standing in the Church; return to your duty, and comfort and joy will return to your heart.

And, finally, I would appeal to those who never attend the prayer meeting. There are some such, always ready to go where there is preaching, but never go near a prayer meeting. Have you considered the words of Christ, "Where two or three are gathered," &c. ? What do you think of these words? Are they true? Do you believe these words of Christ? Then he is at every prayer meeting of his true disciples, small as it may be. If it consists of only two or three, Christ is there; the precious Savior is there; the Savior who shed his blood for you on the cross; the Great Redeemer is there; the glorious King of Zion is there, displaying the riches of his power and grace to his people. And will you not go to such a meeting—a meeting where Christ himself is present to receive his people, with all that love and affection which he manifested when he gave himself for them, and where he would be willing to receive you, if you only would go and give up your hearts to him? O, sinner, you know not how much you lose, when you lose the benefit of a prayer meeting. You need prayer, you need the Savior; and you ought to go to the Savior, and be thankful for every opportunity to meet with those who are willing to pray for you.